

## SACRAMENTO RIVER CONSERVATION AREA

*c/o California Department of Water Resources  
2440 Main Street  
Red Bluff, Ca. 96080*



Denny Bungarz, Chairman  
Ben Carter, Vice Chairman  
Jane Dolan, Secretary/Treas.  
Burt Bundy, Manager (530) 528-7411  
Fax (530) 528-7422  
bundy@water.ca.gov  
Web page: www.sacramentoriver.ca.gov

# SRCA NOTES

June, 2001

### ❖ Project Activities and Updates

Burt Bundy, Manager of the SRCA, and as representative of the State Reclamation Board, participated in a visit to Washington D.C. to discuss various flood control related activities within the Central Valley. The need for a comprehensive look at flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration, as provided by the Comprehensive Study, and specific projects within the SRCA, such as Woodson Bridge and Hamilton City, were discussed with representatives of the area. Funding for pre-construction, engineering and design was requested for the 2002 Corps of Engineers budget for **Hamilton City. Woodson Bridge** -Funding through the Corps of Engineers Section 1135 program for Ecosystem improvements to authorized projects was discussed. Key to the success of this project is the balance of flood control and ecosystem benefits to the area. **M&T/Llano Seco & Refuge Pumps** – A group of “affected parties” met on May 14 at the M&T Ranch to discuss the draft of the Technical Memorandum by Stillwater Science. The draft addresses the alternative solutions to reduce the threat of sedimentation to the pump intake and City of Chico sewer outfall.

### ❖ More on the M&T/Llano Seco & Refuge Pumps

The relocation of the pumps that service the M & T Ranch, the Llano Seco Ranch, and both of the State and Federal refuges on the Llano Seco, has been heralded as a model of cooperation and resource planning. Not only did the joint effort remove an impediment to salmon reproduction on Big Chico Creek, but it allowed for a diversion removal on Butte Creek and provided water for wildlife refuge needs. Too good to be true? Maybe....In the past few years a gravel bar in the Sacramento River at the mouth of Big Chico Creek has enlarged and migrated downstream, threatening the pump intakes and the adjacent City of Chico sewer outfall. If the gravel bar continues to move as it is now, the pump intakes would either be blocked or again become part of Big Chico Creek, and impact salmon movement in the creek.

Never fear! Again, the spirit of cooperation and hopefully, innovation, has stepped forward. CALFED, through the efforts of the Sacramento River Conservation Area, has provided funding to determine possible short and long term solutions to the problem. It is too early to predict what all the alternatives may be, but it appears that some type of dredging of the bar may provide for continued pump operation until a more permanent fix can be completed. The real news, though, is that the dialogue and understanding between resource agencies, landowners, conservation groups, and permitting entities is moving the process forward in a positive fashion. Those affected by, and involved in, the initial process have included the M & T and Llano Seco Ranches, Calif. Dept of Fish and Game, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Calif. Dept. of Water Resources, the Reclamation Board, Calif. Dept. of Parks and Recreation, and the City of Chico. Several interested parties will also participate in the planning process coordinated by the Sacramento River Conservation Area.

- ❖ **May 17<sup>th</sup> TAC Meeting** ---Koll Buer, DWR, discussed the sources and transport of debris and sediment within the Sacramento River system below Shasta Dam. He indicated that large storms, such as the one in January 1997, moved a lot of new material into the system. Stacy Cepello, DWR, reviewed the draft language for the IRZG in Reach 3. The sub-committee looking at Handbook language concerning the impact of riprap on riparian habitat agreed to another meeting, or e-mail discussion, to continue to work on the wording in an attempt to reach an acceptable compromise. There will be a speaker at the next TAC meeting to talk about Good Neighbor Policy, Safe Harbor and the options that are available.

❖ **May 24<sup>th</sup> SRCA Board Meeting** – Denny Bungarz, SRCA Board Chair, reported on the Executive Committee meeting prior to the Board meeting where they discussed several of the “issues to be resolved”. Ben Carter will chair a sub-committee to look at a Good Neighbor policy, Safe Harbor, and a possible mitigation fund and grievance procedures. Burt Bundy discussed his recent trip to Washington, D.C. with Pete Rabbon and Tim Ramirez, which concentrated on flood control issues and projects within the SRCA. He also talked about the possible outline and time frame of providing amendments to the Handbook. A date of July 16<sup>th</sup> was set for a workshop on the definition of the IRZ in Reach 3, location to be determined.

Mike Thabault, USF&WS, talked to the group about the process involved in arriving at a Biological Opinion. Mike could not talk about the specifics of the current Biological Opinion concerning the impact of riprap on sites being considered by the Corps of Engineers for bank protection because of ongoing negotiations. Dan Keppen reported on the May 17<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting. Barney Flynn, Sacramento River Partners, gave an update on the Jacinto restoration project in Glenn County. John Merz, Sacramento River Preservation Trust, reported on the upcoming Spring Speaker Series in Chico beginning May 26<sup>th</sup>.

➤ **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. What are the Inner River Zone Guidelines?**

**A.** The Inner River Zone Guidelines define the area along the Sacramento River described in the Handbook as an area of managed, or limited, meander. It’s definition varies within each of the 4 Reaches, but is consistent in the concept that it provides room for the channel movement necessary to attain the goal of the program, “to preserve remaining riparian habitat and reestablish a continuous riparian ecosystem along the River between Redding and Chico, and reestablish riparian vegetation along the river from Chico to Verona”. The IRZ Guidelines refer to an area of recent river movement and frequent flooding within the project levees. These lands usually have mixed soil types, erode easily and because of these reasons, are marginal economic farming units.

The Inner River Zone Guidelines have also been developed to provide more certainty to landowners as to where restoration activities would occur. Through the site-specific planning process outlined in the Handbook, land management issues that may affect neighbors are addressed before projects begin. Studies and permits must be completed before any activities occur within the floodways and flood flow capacities cannot be negatively impacted. Voluntary participation is assured through the Sacramento River Conservation Area, and if all landowners chose to participate, a total of about 35-40,000 acres would fall within the IRZ in all seven counties.

The Conservation Area includes the Inner River Zone, and the land outside the IRZ is also considered eligible for habitat restoration, but is considered important for it’s agricultural value to the economy of the area. “Ownership of property in the Conservation Area will not result in any regulation or taxation to the landowner---it merely makes landowners eligible to participate in voluntary programs.” (*Handbook, pg. 1-6*)

➤ **Future SRCA Board/TAC Meeting Dates**

- Next SRCA Board Meeting June 28<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 p.m., Willows City Hall, Willows
- Next TAC Meeting June 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 a.m., Willows City Hall, Willows

**A public informational workshop will be held on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001 to discuss the Inner River Zone in Reach 3 (Chico Landing to Colusa). The meeting will be held at the Princeton High School, 473 State Street, Princeton, Ca. from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. More information will follow in the July newsletter.**



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